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The Commonweal

October 21, 1949

Arms for Germany?

Jean Botrot

The Cult of the Present

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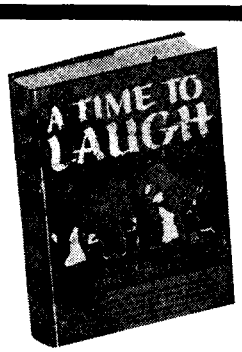

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The
COMMONWEAL

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More Social Security?

WHEN social security was first enacted in the early New Deal days, the aim was to compensate for certain harsh effects of mass production. Savings of any size were not possible for millions of workers even when they were continuously on the job; prevailing wage scales were too low. Those who had serious illnesses, or suffered disabilities when not on the job, or fell victim to periodic lay-offs due to fluctuations of the business cycle, found things even more desperate. Originally, then, the program was restricted largely to employees of business and industry and designed to cushion the worst hardships encountered in winning a livelihood in these highly competitive spheres.

One sector of the new legislation just passed by the House is simply a strengthening of the original provisions. As the dollar shrank in value, the modest scales of old age benefits, for instance, lost whatever claim they had to making a retired worker self-supporting. Moreover, it has been obvious all along that the one percent contributed both by employer and worker falls woefully short of a sound actuarial basis for building up needed reserves. The increase, in rates of benefits and contributions adopted by the House, therefore, is clearly in the direction of realism.

Beyond this point the way of the commentator gets rougher. The extension of the system to 11,000,000 more Americans embodies a distinctly new principle. The objective has grown from that of affording protection to the 35,000,000 employed in our competitive commercial-industrial system to that of providing government security for everyone. That is a tremendous step in some direction.

Examination of the bill, category by category, emphasizes the difficulty in knowing where to draw the line. Should our compatriots who are self-employed — barbers, accountants, newsdealers, small shopkeepers of every sort—be entitled to such government guarantees? These non-professional people comprise the largest group designated in the new bill. Should we also make eligible the almost equal number of employees of local and state governments and those of charitable and other non-profit organizations, all of whom operate largely outside the competitive and fluctuating business world? What about salesmen, taxi drivers, miners and loggers on contract, all of whom feel the rude impact of ups and downs in the national economy? The same query goes for domestic servants, another new group which is similarly susceptible.

ONE major group is not included in the legislation: farm workers of all sorts. The omission is deliberate; it reflects the pressure of farm organizations which represent big commercial farm operators who oppose such security status for their often itinerant workers. Yet farm workers are in many ways the most insecure of all. To the hazards of the business cycle, and fluctuations in domestic and world markets, must be added the uncertainties arising from floods, drought, insect pests, plant and animal diseases. With their irregularity of employment, at rock-bottom wages, farm workers are in greater need of social benefits than any other major group. They should be the first addition.

The new principle of government benefits for all should be examined all the more critically because it is such a terrific vote-getter. Even the politicians themselves should pause before espousing it. It would bring a flock of votes for one election. But after that what is left to promise? The "outs" will never advocate snatching benefits from millions of pensioners. The "ins" can hardly raise the ante, for even the most gullible voter will realize that there are some limits to government largesse.

Security in old age is a peculiarly American problem. Family ties are weaker than in other lands; the proportion of older people here will continue sharply on the increase. It is an urgent

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problem. But can you have government-guaranteed security for everyone without the greater personal insecurities innate in the full-fledged welfare state?

The Best Defense

EVERY now and then a Catholic apologist is heard to argue that if the Church were to disappear tomorrow, Protestantism would go, too, for the simple reason that there wouldn't be anything left to protest against. The argument, a highly semantic one, doesn't seem to be the kind to keep the members of the Federal Council awake at night. But it goes great guns—or at least it used to—in those sham-battle maneuvers that periodically brighten up Religion classes.

The innocent reader of many, if not most of our diocesan papers and monthly magazines must occasionally come to something of a similar conclusion about Catholicism and Communism. If Communism were to disappear overnight, what in the world would be left to talk about? Sometimes, listening to sermons, attending meetings, tuning into Catholic radio programs, reading popular Catholic material, one gets the impression that Catholicism is only a giant anti-Communist force which draws its real energies indirectly, from Marxist sources.

Jacques Maritain once asked his listeners at a philosophers' meeting to consider what a different world we might be living in if a Thomist had written *Das Kapital.* That is an interesting, if somewhat tragic consideration for today. There may be similar considerations tomorrow, with equally tragic overtones, unless at least some of the seemingly limitless energy going into the ancient and wearying anti-Communist crusade, which has usually been notoriously long on rhetoric and short on reason, isn't diverted into more positive channels.

Fighting Communism has become in America a popular and exhausting pastime for all kinds of people (some Catholic veterans have been heard to complain like Jimmy Durante that now everybody is trying to get into the act); as pastimes go, it may be less harmful than others. But it is an expensive occupation, too. An alarmingly high percentage of the national income is going into the fight. That perhaps can be justified by the demands of national security. But the outlay of cold cash is not the greatest expense. Money, after all, is only money.

What American Catholics cannot afford is the sheer energy being expended in the realm of thought and spirit for an *anti,* largely rhetorical enterprise. The youthful enthusiasm given to a negation might be given to genuinely Christian social reconstruction. The emphasis on fear and suspicion found everywhere might well be transformed into hope and vision—and hard work.

The Committee Room Campaign

IN all the pettiness of the Navy-Air Force controversy it is apparent that much more profound matters are still unsettled and are only now being permitted to enter the area of public discussion and public decision.

At this stage certain general features of the situation have been brought into the open. The Defense Department's espousal of the B-36-atom bomb strategy should never have been formulated without a more public consideration. That decision could have a lot to do with the way a good many of the people of the world live—or exist—in the last half of our century. The Navy's attack on the strategic bombing theory has been effective, and is reportedly substantiated by the as yet unreleased Air Force Harmon Report. While, as many have jumped to point out, the Navy's concern about the morality of indiscriminate bombing is partially a recent development, a basic truth is there. We cannot ever war to end wars by annihilating enemy populations.

Navy arguments about the imprudence of relying on a single weapon (and their contention that such is US policy) sounded convincing. Convincing to the layman, at least. Admiral Trapnell's "six false premises about the B-36" were impressive. If the Navy can prove its unqualified charges, the AF will have a large explanation to make when its turn comes.

These are issues that, as in the first case, tremendously affect the whole course of US action—and thus the world's; and in the second case involve fantastic sums of money to be spent on bombers, or carriers, or lost on cancelled carriers. These are not issues that are to be left either to the pride and/or petulance of Air Force and Naval officers. Nor should the public's right to consider them depend on Captain Crommelin's back-corridor histrionics.

Citizens have questions to ask Mr. Johnson, Mr. Matthews, and Mr. Symington. Does the Defense Department intend to eliminate Naval and Marine aviation, Mr. J.? Does the elimination of the Navy's tactical air arm not seriously damage the Navy's ability to carry out the missions assigned it? (Mr. Matthews says security is "imperiled.")

And Mr. Matthews: In making the previously ordered reductions in Naval expenditures was it not the Navy itself that chose to make the cut in aviation? Why should silence have been imposed on Naval officers so stringently that they are driven to current melodramatic tactics to make their convictions known? Why has the whole affair been allowed to reach the state where Naval officers jeer the Secretary of the Navy at committee hearings?

And Mr. Symington: Why is the Air Force

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so grandiose in its claims, yet so possessive about its bombers that the Navy is not allowed near? Has the AF stressed bombers to the dangerous detriment of interceptors and tactical aircraft?

Let us openly decide the place of the Navy. Let us openly make our military policy, and then let us enforce it fairly and firmly.

East German State

ONE of the ground rules for European power politics was laid down by Lenin when he said that "he who has Germany has Europe." What he meant was that to control Europe you have to have the whole of Germany, not just the Eastern or Western half of it.

The Russians, acting on Lenin's advice, have had one steady purpose in Europe since the Potsdam Conference, and that is to keep Germany in one piece. Their slogan has been, and is, "German unity." Of course it has to be unity on Russian terms, and when the West, at the London Conference of Foreign Ministers in 1947, refused to settle for German unity on Russian terms, the Conference broke up and so did Germany. The Russians were unhappy. Molotov stormed: "No ersatz government for [the western zones] will be an adequate substitute for the Soviet proposal of a central German government." The partition of Germany was precisely what he did not want, because it put a Communist grab of all Germany out of reach.

"Ersatz" is a good word for the East German State which the Russians have now set up in their zone. It is called the German Democratic Republic. But the German people were not consulted, there was no election. Wilhelm Pieck, the top German Communist, simply "announced" the new state, all in favor said "aye," and that was that. Another satellite appeared.

The Soviets like to call this new state the "all-German government," because Party delegates from all sectors of Germany, East and West, are included in it, at least nominally. So the Russians continue to work away at their "unity" theme.

It happens that the West wants the unity of Germany as badly as the Russians do. Europe cannot recover economically until there is normal traffic throughout Germany; and it cannot recover politically until Germany as one nation is adjusted to European Union. In short, the West needs German unity because it agrees with Lenin's statement. The question is not, Should Germany be united? The question is, Who, Russia or the West, will put Germany back together?

With the formation of the East German State, the Russians are making their bid to do the job. They will have certain advantages. Their "German unity" slogan has a shrewd propaganda appeal to the Germans themselves, who look on Berlin, in the Eastern zone, as their political center. As East-West trade increases within Germany—$112,000,000 worth will move in the next nine months—it will bind the zones together and more Germans will see the advantages of the golden slogan, "German unity." Probably the strongest point in Russia's favor now in the contest for Germany is the fact that the East German State is a police-state. From experience, the West has learned that a police-state can throttle even a people as hostile as most Germans are toward the Russians.

As the cold war for Germany intensifies, there will almost certainly be a series of showdowns, in Berlin blockade fashion, between the new Eastern and Western German states. The prize is not just German unity, as the Russians would have us believe, but Europe.

Crisis Again in France

THE collapse of a French Cabinet is not surprising news any more, especially when one reason for it is the failure to cure that everyday economic sickness: the combination of high prices and low wages. The Queuille Government had been controlling wages, but not prices. When M. Queuille would not decontrol wages to let them catch up with rising prices, he had a tough time explaining matters to the labor unions.

It is just possible that the Cabinet, which had long been trying to bring wages and prices into line, would have succeeded, had it not been for the devaluation of the British pound. After Sir Stafford Cripps popped his news, the franc had to be devalued along with the pound. This disturbance to the already wavering French economy sent the Queuille Cabinet down. It cannot be that Britain did not realize beforehand what the effect of her action would probably be in France. But Britain simply had to be secretive about devaluation to prevent a banking run on the pound.

Britain, therefore, was in this position: she could not warn France of an event that was to upset the French government, even though Britain wanted the Queuille Cabinet to remain in power. Britain did not want to precipitate this Cabinet collapse because European Union, which is largely a British project, cannot afford a weak France.

The fall of the Queuille Cabinet makes one fact tragically obvious: in a moment of common peril, Britain and France, the two leaders of the European Union movement, did not consult one another, and in a sense they could not do so. Yet here was a situation the nature of which makes consultation absolutely necessary and inevitable. European Union has a long way to go before it is more than a happy dream. One thing it must do is to work out a common currency policy to prevent such a thing as Britain's springing a devaluation surprise on her best friend on the Continent.

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Should Germany Be Kept Disarmed?

A French Radical-Socialist suggests an answer based on a recent visit.

Jean Botrot

SINCE the birth of the West German State, one of the important questions discussed has to do with the creation of a German army in some form or other. It is not an immediate problem, but something that is deferred is not thereby settled. Therefore it is quite logical for a man who is as well posted on German affairs as Robert d'Harcourt of the French Academy to take advantage of the interval involved to publish in the *Revue de Défense nationale* a full and impartial inventory of the positions taken since 1948.

Hostile reactions to German rearmament have been quite lively and numerous and M. d'Harcourt calls upon certain weighty testimony. First of all he cites that of Walter Lippmann, who expresses the fear that a Germany which is militarily re-equipped will not take long to listen to "its voices"—those of Frederick II, Bismarck and even Ribbentrop, in preference to those of the occupying powers. On the British side the *Daily Mail* was no less forthright: "To repulse a possible ally is indeed a risk, but there is an even greater danger in arming an ally who tomorrow can become an enemy. Of the two evils let us choose the lesser."

M. d'Harcourt concludes with a terse analysis of an article published in May, 1948, by Carl J. Friedrich, former assistant adviser for German affairs of the American military government in Germany and currently a professor at Harvard. Dr. Friedrich stresses primarily the danger of a premature evacuation of Germany—which is evidence, not wholly clear to the public perhaps, that such evacuation would have as its corollary the reconstituting of a German army, "with a return to power of the former officer corps, including the General Staff." His conclusion is that the greatest tolerance should greet the creation of a popular militia "inspired by the example of Switzerland, rigidly deprived of all heavy armament, severely purged of all professional elements" and limited to a total of 25,000 men.

Among the advocates of a contrary idea, M. d'Harcourt cites Maurice Duverger and the Englishman, Liddell Hart. The first in the *Monde* last November took the courageous but isolated position that the German army should be restored. The second asserted that the military defense of Europe could not be guaranteed without the participation of Germany.

*

THE GERMANS inevitably felt that they had a word of their own to contribute to the debate. Two of them who have taken part, and undoubtedly will continue to do so, are especially fitted for it. The first is Eugen Kogon, author of the well known book, "SS. Staat," and now president of the *Europa Union* and director of the *Frankfurter Hefte*. Kogon was one of the most courageous victims of Hitlerism in Germany. He was arrested in 1938 on the very day that German troops entered Austria and until the liberation he was continuously in prisons and concentration camps. I recently asked him how he had been able to defy his captors for so long. "First," he replied, "because I was working out in my head the outlines for creating the new Germany. And secondly, because I believed in God."

Opposing Kogon is Dr. Kramer, who is editor-in-chief of the *Rheinischer Merkur,* a particularly able and impassioned figure who also dared to say no to Hitlerism. Let us see what their argument is.

In November, 1948, in the course of a press conference, Dr. Kogon took the risk of making a statement which was to have considerable repercussions even though it was couched in the most prudent terms: There is every indication, he said, that rearmament of Western Germany is near at hand and the German people are not to be consulted about it.

Let us try to give a resumé, in two quotations, of the position of Kogon. The first has to do with German soldiers now residing in the Soviet zone: "Let us be sure that the men of yesterday's German general staff, Messrs. Steidle, Fischer, Bechler and their colleagues, who now have elbow room in the Soviet sector of Karlshorst and are regarded much more tenderly by the Russians than such Communist comrades as Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbrich—let us be quite sure that these gentlemen have for a long time had their plan quite ready in their pockets."

The second quotation has to do with Western Germany: "There live with us leaders of big

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business, much as they did before, but with the difference that formerly they played a lesser rôle. These are men whom History has taught nothing. And there are German soldiers (with a few very rare exceptions) of whom I must say without exaggeration that their sentiments of loyalty to democracy are more than doubtful. Some of these men may very well make common cause with the German Bolshevik generals."

In brief, Kogon, without discounting the threat from the East, seeks to warn his readers against a solution which would be worse than evil, since it would risk bringing about on both sides of the Iron Curtain the joining of the two separated fragments of the former German army. It must be recognized that there is in this reasoning, so well founded on knowing the men, a great deal of logic and realism.

The position of Dr. Kramer is simultaneously patriotic, idealistic and European. In the struggle of the democracies against dictatorship, Western Germany has its rôle to play. She cannot be expected to surrender to the enemy. The reconstituting of an independent army would, of course, provide a temptation for certain Germans and a risk for the other countries. But the new German army will be placed in the service of the European organization. There is nothing to say against that except that Europe is still in chaos. It might then be concluded, with M. d'Harcourt, that the ideas of Dr. Kramer are premature.

*

TO SPEAK truly, the opposition between Kogon and Kramer is only superficial. They are both good Germans and good Europeans. Both reject the prospect of the German generals of the last war back in uniform. For his part, Kramer makes a formal distinction between militarism, which he condemns, and an armed citizenry which he defends. But here scarcely any of his compatriots seem able to follow him.

All present observers of Germany have noticed —sometimes to their surprise—the detachment which the bulk of the German people manifest toward the problems and the profession of the military. A review licensed by the Americans and published in Heidelberg recently inquired of its readers whether they desired a provision in the constitution which would give the German people the right to refuse military service in case of war. Seventy per cent answered yes. I myself have visited a number of German universities in recent weeks. I asked the students whom I met to speak to me with absolute frankness and I believe that this was all the more possible because the need for expressing their inmost feelings is often tremendous with German youth today. All of them had scarcely passed their twentieth year, having served in the army from the time they were fifteen to seventeen, and they showed no nostalgia at all for military life nor, with Alfred de Vigny, did they indicate they regarded it in terms either of servitude or grandeur. These philologists and mathematicians had completely divested themselves of their soldierhood. Do not ask me if the viewpoint will persist. I am describing things as they are now and refuse to make prophecies.

*

OTHER RATHER curious tests bearing on the fear of war are furnished by a Gallup poll in the French Zone. This inquiry comprised three questions:

1. Do you believe that a new war will break out within five years?

The students at Freiburg and Tubingen replied:

Yes, with absolute certainty	14%
Yes, but with less certainty	38%
No, there is little chance	17%
No, it is impossible	9%
Without an opinion	22%

2. Do you believe that wars are avoidable or that they are inevitable because of human nature?

The same students replied:

Inevitable because of human nature	54%
Due to fate	18%
Avoidable	23%
Without an opinion	5%

It is important to mention here that other young people between 14 and 20 years of age made different answers to the same question; 39% of those of peasant origin felt that wars were avoidable. Isn't that characteristic of many peasants of other nationalities, who are inclined to reflection and are always hard hit by wars?

3. Do you believe that the years of military service are themselves capable of educating a man?

Yes	10%
No	38%
Military life corrupts the character	19%
That depends	33%

If we try to reach conclusions on the basis of these answers we note at once the frightful fatalism of German youth confronted with the idea of war (and in their attitude toward most other problems). To balance this, provisionally at least, is the lack of attraction for barracks, the uniform, officers' insignia, the profession of arms and everything which the profession brings that is gratifying or frightful.

I well understand that all students do not think so forcibly in this fashion and I refer notably here to those former captains and colonels for whom, according to one of Kogon's expressions,

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an ascent into heaven was immediately followed by a plunge into hell. A certain number of this group are also students—students of thirty, thirty-five, forty, who study hard, if with resignation. I do not say that a certain number of them have not gotten rid of the militarist poison, but I am quite unable to make out how many have.

I am going to quote a man whose remarks always make a great stir: Dr. Schumacher, president of the Social Democratic Party. This indomitable polemicist, whom we must remember was an unshakable adversary of Hitlerism before he began launching his arrows at the Allies, wrote in 1946, in a manifesto of the Socialist Party: "After 1918 people spoke in Germany of the officers' class struggle. These tendencies are incomparably stronger today than they were then. Today the Nazis indulge in the fondest dreams: well armed, to be able to fire in their own country on their disarmed political adversaries; that is a state of mind which the world cannot yet understand but which we, enemies of the Nazis, have known well since 1918 and can appreciate."

Whatever sympathy, then, is aroused by the idea of an armed citizenry so dear to Dr. Kramer, it seems obvious that the number of those in Germany who could embody and serve that civic conception is not yet great enough, nor are they sufficiently mature, for the task that is proposed for them. Nor can the attempt be made to raise armies for Europe even before Europe exists. At the moment the situation for the future German army is like that of the sword of which Joseph Proudhon spoke, that "he would make use of it to defend institutions and, when necessary, to combat them." Wisdom demands, until a new order is achieved, that the sword should be left in its scabbard.

The Cult of the Present

Literature, like politics, seeks its great men; if there aren't any, critics invent them

Julien Benda

READERS of these pages have no doubt noticed the systematically praiseful, if it is not ecstatic, tone of most of our critics in regard to contemporary literature. They cannot mention an author by name without speaking of his "beautiful book," of "his exquisite sensibility," when they are not talking of his "resplendent mastery" or of his "genius." Generally they do not explain such judgments, and thus they offer floral bouquets for which they do not pay. An invariable trait of theirs is to hail this man's novel which is "so alive," that man's poems which are "so alive," this third person's study which is "so alive," as if a work cannot be alive and still not possess a trace of intellectual value, nor even of artistic worth. As if this novel of a little woman who makes a splash—a novel which will be completely forgotten in six months—were not infinitely "more alive" than Flaubert's "Sentimental Education."

Such praise is also often purely automatic and seems quite independent of sharp criticisms in matters of detail. Thus Delacroix in the "Treatise on Psychology" directed by Dumas, knocked flat all the theses of Bergsonism; after which he proclaimed that their author was one of the greatest thinkers in history. It recalls the famous report: "Except for that, Madame la Marquise, all goes well." As far as criticism goes the assumption is that it is essential to be everybody's friend.

★

WHAT is the source of this great attraction, which might be called deliberate, that literary production of our time exercises over our pundits?

There are practical reasons for it, I believe. To express oneself freely, even severely, on certain "masters" of the day, is to affront the heroes of a world which does not permit its gods to be unmasked. For the critic is not compelled to be a hero. Add to that the *esprit de corps*, which in my youth I believed was proper to soldiers and magistrates, and which I have now come to see is also highly characteristic of men of letters, even of philosophers. I was confirmed in this opinion about the latter a few years ago: an iconoclast attacked Bergson and everyone rose up against him as sacrilegious, in the name of the philosophic fraternity, even those who shared that critic's views. To be honest, I should speak here of philosophy professors rather than philosophers. Three of the latter who were very harsh on their adversaries were Descartes, Renouvier and William James. Not one of them was a professor of philosophy. Finally, the praise of the fraternity not only has the effect

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of warding off attacks, it also has its positive side. "I say that your book is fine, you will say the same of mine tomorrow." The community of one's fellows exists in other fields besides politics.

*

THE predilection of our critics for contemporary literature stems from another cause which is much more serious: they love this literature, or at least decide to love it, not so much because of the values they find in it as for the fact that it is the literature of their time, it is *theirs*. They demand that the critic love his time, at least that he feel some solidarity with it. To wish to be wholly detached, to judge one's time as if the critic were not in the midst of it, seems to them treason just as if one sought the same viewpoint toward one's country.

The desire to invest with a privileged character the works of our time, because they are of our time, is affirmed in our day with unusual force. Here special attention—if it is not unique—is paid the "young" poetry, the "young" philosophy. There a master (Rimbaud) declares: "Let us be absolutely modern," another (Proust) that what happened more than fifty years ago "does not interest him"; another (Claudel) proclaims his cult of "the present moment"; another (Gide): "What is more absurd than the question, What matters all that is not eternal? If it is not asked ironically."

Value is conferred upon a work simply by being of its own time. I have just heard it said of an author: "No doubt he is not a great writer but he is so clearly of our time." A critic declares that a certain novelist (Malraux) is the greatest because he is "the most contemporary." Another has it that the worth of a novel depends entirely and uniquely on the precision with which it portrays the author's generation. A professor reassured me recently that surrealist literature is great since it is that of the time in which we live. This type of evaluation tends toward philosophy; a philosopher (Hamelin) who deals with one of the most profound problems that can be posed by human thought, the problem of categories, was the object of the disdain of his colleagues because his preoccupations "were not those of his time." Does so much of the contemporary enter the hearts of the immortals?

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TO be sure, the cult of critics for the men of their own time has always existed to some degree. It might be said that, by a sort of silent revenge, this cult is greatest when the men themselves are least important. Claudian was feted as Virgil never was; Callimachus enjoyed a renown which Socrates and Plato did not find; Valéry is the object of a devotion that neither Goethe nor Victor Hugo inspired; Giraudoux was the center of a praiseful clamor which greeted neither Molière nor de Musset. Recently a likable musician, Reynaldo Hahn, was honored by a funeral service much more sumptuous than Beethoven's or Wagner's. The fact is, and it is quite natural, that every epoch wishes to have its great men and, when there aren't any, they must be invented. It reminds me of the remark that Barrès made about politics, but which is even more to the point with literature: "Certain men gain the highest places; it is not that their merits put them there but that it is absolutely necessary that the places be filled."

This mechanical devotion of the critics to their own time brings with it an evil which is not often enough revealed. Those who mislead their time by failing to recognize its great artists such as Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Bizet and César Franck are loudly denounced. No one says a word against the critics who make the error of deifying falsely: Thomas Corneille, Delille, Casimir-Delavigne, Meyerbeer, to speak only of the dead. This second error appears to me to be even more serious than the first, for the public admires those whom the critics exalt and is quite happy to ignore those it is unable to perceive.

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TO return to contemporary criticism of the authors of our time, I affirm that it comprises mostly, especially in the young reviewers, an act of love rather than one of judgment. In regard to certain writers (Péguy, Claudel, Bernanos, Valéry, Malraux) such comment is pure hagiography, clearly stripped of all criticism, if that term implies freedom of expression in regard to their works. Besides, it is proclaimed that the function of the critic is to "sympathize," quite another process than to judge even though the two things are not mutually exclusive. This obsession of the great majority of our critics for the literature of the day produces a certain effect on the reader. As I see it, there is a double effect.

On the one hand the praise of a book no longer moves him — still less if it is of the greatest intensity, even when this praise might be deserved in all its enthusiasm. On the other hand, he who renders some severe verdicts on this literature, if he necessarily suffers blows from the men of letters, might well gain thereby the approval of the public, if people find his severity justified. That is what recently happened to an author whom I know as well as I know myself.

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On Reading

A novel or newspaper, a biography or Scripture—all can lead to the same end

Alban Baer

PROBABLY no earlier age of history has seen the publication of so many books, magazines, pamphlets, brochures—so much printed matter of every conceivable sort. In no earlier period have lived so many people with at least the ability to read. Never before has there been so much discussion—or at least so much that passes for discussion—of what has been written. Never before has there been such an eagerness to learn how properly to read: a number of books have, in fact, been written with nothing more than this as their aim. And yet, perhaps, never before have there been so few good readers—so few who have retained anything or profited from what they read; so few who could rise from reading a book, I will not say "better"—but at any rate different for having read it.

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ALL reading should add to our knowledge. On the lowest and simplest level it should add to our knowledge of facts. From a reading, for example, of Sherwood's excellent account of the late President Roosevelt's relations with one of his chief aides, Harry Hopkins, we should have acquired a knowledge of the number of meetings Roosevelt had with Churchill and Stalin, the main points discussed at these meetings, and —so far as the compiler has been able to communicate them to us—the opinions of the chief figures on these points and what, if anything, was decided as the outcome of these meetings.

On a slightly higher level, there is to be gained a knowledge of the chief *personalities*. From observing the way the principal actors in the important drama of the war behaved in the circumstances related, we ought to be able to guess, or to predict, the reaction they would have to similar sets of circumstances, whether such circumstances actually occurred and are sketched only lightly or not at all in Sherwood's book, or whether they are only imaginary—whether such circumstances only *might* have occurred if events had taken some course other than they did. We might feel ourselves able to predict, for example, what might have happened if both Roosevelt and Hopkins had lived into the post-war world —what attitude they might have taken and what steps they might have set going to relieve the Berlin blockade, or how soon they would have felt the necessity for the Atlantic treaty.

We get some inkling of the reason Hopkins could be the victim of such bitter dislike; why Roosevelt could command such wholehearted loyalty; why Stalin could lead them both to such a complete misunderstanding of his own character and aims without perhaps uttering a single untruth. And in judging these persons we are judging ourselves. We are able to perceive why we could not have handled the situation they faced with nearly the same competence; or we see, possibly, how we might have handled it much better! In short, we are making silent comparisons between these men and ourselves; and if we are doing this honestly and with a good use of the information which the book provides for us, we are learning about ourselves. We do this by recognizing, above all, the common humanity that unites us: the common emotions that sway us or leave us unmoved; the common sources of information and experience that are at the disposal of all.

I feel it is important for us to see clearly that scarcely a book exists—and I chose deliberately for my example a book undeniably "secular" in conception and intention—that scarcely a book exists which cannot provide material for reflection and meditation on our nature and destiny. The great novels, which may be said to differ from the great histories and biographies only in that they present a picture of life as planned and arranged by a human mind—creative but finite—the great novels can appeal to us and aid us in exactly the same fashion as Mr. Sherwood's book. All these books, if they contain for us anything profitable at all, contain just this: a picture of the human soul in all its splendor and power; in all its capabilities for good and evil and in all its attributes whereby it imitates and contains a reflection, however dim, of its divine exemplar. And reading in which, however unconsciously, we look for this picture of the human soul has every right to be called, in the broadest sense of the term, "spiritual reading."

Now, in view of all that we have just said by way of preliminary, what must we say about the reading of avowedly "spiritual books"—what

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must we say about the reading of Holy Scripture? All that we have said about reading in general is of course equally true of our reading of Holy Scripture. But it is only a part of the truth.

In reading a book such as *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, objective as the narration of facts may seem to be, we are nevertheless in the hands of a human compiler and arranger of those facts: a human compiler liable to bias, forgetfulness, and other weaknesses of human nature. In the case of Holy Scripture, this compiler, this arranger, is none other than God Himself. The picture of human life that we receive from the pages of Scripture is therefore, quite apart from the question of divine revelation, a true picture. It presents to us living men and women. Who can forget the importunities of Abraham in the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, pleading, almost bargaining with the Lord to avert the destruction of Sodom? the business acumen of Jacob in his dealings with Laban? the impatience of Moses in the face of the complaints and murmurings of the very people whom he had led out of the house of bondage? the stolid forthrightness of Peter as Our Savior washed his feet? St. Paul's vivid autobiography in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians?

All these are the merest details of the main thread. Their importance to the whole narrative and to the message of Scripture is slight. Yet they add tremendously to the credibility of the narrative, to our realizing and appreciating the fact that these historical persons who walked and talked with God were real people of flesh and blood, altogether representative of the race, of you and me who were to come after them and partake of the great mystery it was their rôle to unfold. God is thus seen to be the supreme literary artist, not satisfied alone with delivering His revelation in the thunder and lightning of Sinai, nor even from the reading-desk of synagogue or temple, but just as much from a book read privately of a quiet evening before a fire with cigarette or pipe. The grace to be derived from the reading of His inspired word does not await propitious, ceremonial, solemn circumstances to make its appearance. It comes also when we settle down prepared to enjoy not only the most sacred but the best book ever written.

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WHEN we think of it as not only an entertaining and instructive piece of literature—when we add, rather, to this view of it a recognition that it comprehends the history of God's dealings with man, its value to us as "holy reading" becomes simply incalculable. We read the creation story in Genesis—the placing of Adam in the garden of paradise, the pledge exacted of him not to eat of the forbidden tree, his breaking the pledge; his expulsion from the garden; the promise of future redemption made by God at that time; the destruction of all his descendants save one just man, Noe, in whose ark, typifying the barque of Peter, all future men were to be saved from condemnation; the patriarchs—Abraham, the first of them, the father of all who believe—who heard God and put their trust in Him; the deliverance from Egypt, typifying the old man of sin going into the promised land of the life of grace; the solemn promulgation of the divine law on Mount Sinai; the wanderings of Israel and its battles for the promised land (portraying as they do so magnificently the struggles of the soul in this world for the knowledge of God and the love of God); the great kingdom of David and Solomon, those two types of the Redeemer who was to come, and in their earthly capital city showing forth the heavenly kingdom, the new Jerusalem, the city of the Lamb; the repeated defections of Israel and the warnings (not unmixed with promise) given it by the prophets; the growing *public* consciousness of the messianic kingdom (for all the just men of the Old Testament had this promise in their hearts); the fulfilment of all these shadows, types, and prophecies in the gospel—the "good tidings"—of Our Lord Jesus Christ; the sublime theology of Saint Paul, who so forcibly points out and emphasizes all I have said here so feebly; the tremendous and mysterious Apocalypse of Saint John, the beloved disciple to whom it was given to lean on the breast of Our Lord and, as his office expresses it, to become the sharer of heavenly secrets—we read, I say, all this and much more, so very much more, in the inexhaustible treasury of Holy Scripture. There is enough, and more than enough, in this one book, or set of books, to provide any of us with reading and meditation for our whole lives.

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ALL other books of spiritual reading look to, indeed, lean upon it. Others are but paraphrases of the wisdom and doctrine it contains—paraphrases all too often, it is to be feared, drawn out to absurd and wearisome lengths. That is why "pious" books are frequently so tedious and why we can sometimes only with the greatest difficulty persuade ourselves to read them. We ought not always to distrust our own judgment in this matter. Often our reluctance is well-founded and bears witness to our dissatisfaction with a diluted product. If we find a book dull, jejune, trite, and in general unhelpful, it will not seldom be to our best spiritual advantage to throw it aside. Yet we must exercise prudence and caution in doing this. If a book has benefited generations of earnest seekers after God, it is not for us lightly to dismiss it. Rather we must,

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as far as we are able, with patience measure it by the yardstick of Holy Scripture.

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NEXT to Holy Scripture, the most valuable spiritual reading for a Christian can be found in the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, now happily, after many years, again being made available in English translation. And the value and importance of these writings may be found to consist precisely in their illuminating, and making pertinent to the Church, passages of Holy Scripture. They are valuable, further, in throwing light on the tradition of the Church—the living tradition which, as we are taught, must ever be our guide in interpreting Scripture. When we read of the particular problems confronting the infant Church in the epistles of an Ignatius or a Polycarp, no less than in the epistles of Saint Paul, we find ourselves living in their very times; and this is by no means merely exercising a graceful piece of historic make-believe. We *are* living in their times; for the period between the close of revelation and the end of the world is as one hour in God's sight (the eleventh hour: note the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in the twentieth chapter of Saint Matthew's gospel and Saint Gregory's homily upon it); and, more practically still, the problems confronting the contemporary Christian community are rapidly coming to resemble the problems confronting the early Christians in their age of persecution.

The great Doctors of the Church, Saint Augustine, Saint Ambrose, Saint Gregory, Saint Jerome (to mention the four great Latin doctors only)—the last in a scholarly and literal sense—were all important commentators on Holy Scripture, and it is to their wisdom and perspicacity, as guided and directed by the Holy Ghost, that Christian tradition owes so much in its particular approach to and reception of God's word. Theirs was a less subjective, introspective age than those presently to follow, or than our own; but from their writings we can gain nonetheless a picture of their own personalities and characters, formed in the image of Christ and formed to be saints: so that besides the objective interpretation they offer, we are given a picture of what the soul must be who, in the words of Saint Benedict, loves nothing better than Christ.

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THE great solitaries, monks, and mystics, too, have left us an account of their experiences in the form of doctrine from which an average man, sincere in his search for God, can learn much. I say *learn*: for none of us can *do* these things without the help of God, earnestly besought of Him through prayer; and thus it is clear that prayer must accompany our reading—must permeate it, become one with it, so that our very reading itself becomes prayer. By entering into and identifying ourselves with the holy writer—by applying to all our reading of sacred books that advice which Saint Augustine gives us for saying the psalms: "If the psalm supplicates, do you the same; if it laments, lament; if it rejoices, rejoice; if it hopes, hope; and if it fears, fear" and that advice which another, far from sacred, writer gives for the study of classic and scientific subjects: "Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; not to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider"—by applying these simple rules, we shall from our reading become not only different but better men, not merely knowledgeable but wise.

There is at least one more point to consider. We might become so captivated by the value of holy reading, so awestruck by the many advantages, the many blessings, it conveys, so intrigued at the complexity and richness of the spiritual horizons it unfolds to us, that we would never read. But the habit of holy reading is one for anyone to form. To know anything is to love it: to know God's word, spoken directly through His inspired writers and indirectly through all whom He, through His Church, has commissioned and encouraged to speak or write of Him—to know God's word is to love its author. "As a man thinketh, so he is;" and what a man thinks is, it is clear, determined by the nature, scope, and intention of his reading. And the encouraging, the comfortable thought about it all is this: his reading of a novel or a newspaper, of biography or history, no less than his reading of Scripture and Fathers, can have God as its end.

The Screen

It's Guts What Count

IT WOULD seem that the story of the man who discovered America could be fashioned into a very exciting movie, a movie that would make our westerns and thrillers look like small peanuts. But alas, the Sydney Box production *"Christopher Columbus"* is no such thing. It is a very handsome movie, beautifully photographed on land and sea in Technicolor; but it somehow lacks heart and is astoundingly dull considering the vitality of its subject. Perhaps Director David MacDonald and his staff were overwhelmed by the bigness of the themes involved. Certainly the cast, which is English except for Fredric March as the daring adventurer and Florence Eldridge as Queen Isabella, throw themselves into the spirit of the piece and do their best to make individual scenes come to life. Some of the episodes are indeed quite lively: those involving the opposition (well played by Francis L. Sullivan) in the Spanish court, and the scenes of rebellion aboard the

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three ships on the long, perilous voyage. But the script-writers, impressed by the pushing around Columbus got before and after his trips and by the seemingly endless waiting through which the man was made to go, tried too hard to get this waiting into the film. In the end we are as worn out as Christopher by waiting and court intrigue.

"Task Force" is also about a man of great courage and foresight. It tells the story of one Jonathan L. Scott who fought through the years since 1921 for aircraft carriers in our Navy. He was not alone, of course, in seeing their importance for modern warfare, but during the '20s and even during the early '30s many people believed that World War I really was the war to end all wars. The film follows the steps of Scott (Gary Cooper) and his fellow-enthusiasts (Walter Brennan, John Ridgley, Bruce Bennett, etc.) from the days of the U.S.S. Langley right through World War II when carrier-launched aircraft proved themselves. As a movie, I found "Task Force" long and talky. Director-writer Delmer Davis seems to have forgotten that a film must have action, more action in fact than a camera can catch as planes take off from and land on a carrier. Many of these flight scenes are stunning, and the documentary war footage is expertly done, but the film as a whole has a sameness that grows monotonous after the first hour. Jane Wyatt is very attractive as Cooper's wife, and their personal story has many touching incidents. But Mr. Cooper's boyish charm on deck or in the air wears thin after a while. There is this to be said about "Task Force" however: it was shown to the critics aboard the U.S.S. Midway, and even before we got out on the Atlantic Ocean for a full day of flights, take-offs and maneuvers, we realized how accurately the movie had caught the feel and life aboard an aircraft carrier. If you need to be convinced that we need more and bigger carriers and if you want to know what happens on and above these ships, then "Task Force" is the film to see.

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THE Italians have sent us a little item that has none of the pretentions of the films reviewed above. *"Under the Sun of Rome"* strings together a group of incidents about young men during and after the war; these boys, sort of Italian Huckleberry Finns, are on the verge of growing up, but are not happy about the prospects—and why should they be, in a war-torn country? Unfortunately Director Renato Castellani needs to be told about discipline in film making. His heart is big and understanding, but he allows his stories and actors to run away with what he is trying to say; and while his very long film occasionally has sequences of moving realism, too much of it is a confusion of life and times and boys all jumbled up. Although the performances in this film are rather good, and although a lot of judicious cutting would help the whole, "Under the Sun of Rome" does not approach "Shoe Shine" or even some of the lesser Italian films as a visualization of what growing-up can be like in a foreign city today.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Of Note

Catholic Committee of the South

THE race-relations workshop of the Catholic Committee of the South, held in Lexington, Kentucky in May, is reported in the current *Interracial Review* (20 Vesey Street, New York 7). Describing the audience at the workshop, A. Jackson says:

> It consisted mainly of young people: students at the University of Kentucky, the senior class from Villa Madonna College in Covington and other educational institutions, working people, a scattering of leaders of Negro organizations, a score of teachers and priests.
>
> Southerners all, they obviously were not blinded to the workings of the Southern social conscience; it was evident that they perceived the dilemma they faced and it was equally evident that they were resolved that their generation would be extricated from its horns.
>
> They listened eagerly and carefully to the words of Rt. Rev. Msgr. T. James McNamara, chairman of the session, and two priests who assisted him in presenting the factors governing race relationships in the Southern States.
>
> Monsignor McNamara is regional chairman of the Catholic Committee of the South race relations department. Pastor of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Savannah, Georgia, he is one of the founders of the Committee and formerly its general chairman. With him were Very Rev. Daniel J. Bourke, of Albany, Georgia and Rev. Anthony Bourges, S.V.D., Negro priest of Lafayette, Louisana.
>
> "There can be no disagreement among Catholics as to the need for elimination of injustices," the Lexington audience was told, "although there may be differences of opinion as to the best means of bringing it about."
>
> Following the speeches was a discussion period. There was no dearth of hands raised, and earnest, sincere people stood to gain the attention of Monsignor McNamara; there was no lack of speaking out.
>
> "What shall we do?" was the theme. "What shall we do, we Lexington men and women, in our schools, our homes, on our streets?"
>
> So it was that their ideas were the ideas that crystallized into the workshop findings:
>
> 1. Eradication of all segregation in all churches; ending of any color barrier to priesthood or the religious life was urged.
>
> 2. Steps to end segregation in schools, beginning at the graduate school level with Catholic schools showing the way to the South's educators.
>
> 3. Opening of hospitals to patients regardless of race and to qualified Negro doctors and nurses.
>
> 4. Establishment of interracial councils.

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Christian Engagement Rings

THE FIRST fall issue of the Catholic Student Magazine *Today* (638 Deming Place, Chicago 14) contains an article by Ann O'Reilly about the problem of young people who want engagement and wedding rings (in spite of what the author calls "the goddesses of the commercial engagement and wedding ring cult") to express the sacredness of their love.

Nowadays even when two people are genuinely in love the young man is forced to think in terms of how big a stone he can get for a price that won't keep him paying installments all his life. The girl is anxious to show off her diamond to her friends—and the bigger the better.

Yet the Church has raised both wedding and engagement rings to the dignity of sacramentals, symbolizing the union of two persons in Christ. It is encouraging, therefore, to find designers and craftsmen who insist that the meaning, not the size, of the ring is the important factor.

One such craftsman is Renard Koehnemann, whom we ran across only recently. Showing us an example of his work, Koehnemann told us: "The ideas for the ring came from the couple. It was my job to carry out their thought in a significant design.

"This couple had decided they wanted a calla lily, a symbol of purity, on their engagement ring, and for the yellow center stalk of the lily they wanted a pearl as a symbol of the Gospel story about the man who had found a pearl of great price, and had gone his way and sold all he had and bought it.

"Another couple had set the date of their formal engagement on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. They had found an ancient symbol of Our Blessed Mother in the form of the Mystical Rose. We finally adapted the design in blue enamel. From the center of the flower emerged a setting for a diamond which further formed a symbol of Christ as the Fruit of the Flower."

Some of the philosophical concepts expressed by the couples bear the marks of a great deal of meditation. One couple wanted Divine Providence to be the theme of their engagement ring, to show their gratitude for God's goodness in bringing them together and to express their continuing dependence on His Divine Will. Koehnemann worked out a design with a diamond, symbolizing God, set in a mounting between two lilies representing the man and woman united by God. The lilies were dictated by Christ's parable teaching confidence in the Will of God: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin; but I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."

"This same couple," Koehnemann added, "wanted their wedding rings to express the Christian's sacrificial attitude toward marriage and family life. A chalice is engraved on the gold bands as a symbol of Christ's sacrifice. . . . .

Catholic International News

Death of a Pioneer

A PARISH priest who died recently in a suburb of Lyon, Father Laurent Remillieux, Pastor of Notre-Dame de Saint-Alban, was a pioneer of the religious revival in France, especially of the revitalization of parish life. Obituaries which appeared in the French press have compared him with the Curé d'Ars. New methods in the workers' apostolate, the liturgical movement, the Catholic peace movement, the movement of the "Companions of St. Francis," the use of specially trained young laywomen as "parish helpers," and many other "innovations" were tried out in Father Remillieux's little parish before they spread to hundreds of other cities and towns.

Father Remillieux started work in the "Red" suburbs of Lyon in 1922. At that time he asked the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyon for permission to build a chapel in one of the priestless and churchless slum areas at the periphery of the city. The Cardinal's advisers expressed doubts regarding the feasibility of Father Remillieux's plans, but permission was finally granted. Father Remillieux chose a neighborhood popularly known as "Transvaal." In the midst of dilapidated wooden shacks emergency shelters of corrugated iron and cardboard, he built a small wooden structure to be used as chapel and rectory. When it became known that a priest was moving in, there was a great deal of excitement in the neighborhood. Some people made angry threats against the "invader," others expressed suspicion. Opposition soon ceased, however, when Father Remillieux's friendly and helpful attitude became generally known, and he became popular among church-goers and non-church-goers alike.

Many anti-Catholic agitators in the neighborhood who used to accuse the Church of "always being on the side of the rich" were silenced by the example of Father Remillieux whose very first crusade was against "money in the church." There are no collection baskets in Notre-Dame de Saint-Alban, no pew rentals, no fees for baptisms, marriages, or funerals, no different "classes" of weddings or funerals, no poor-boxes under the statues of saints. There is only, at the entrance to the church, a container similar to a mailbox into which parishioners are requested to drop once a month an envelope containing their contribution to the church. These envelopes are not numbered and do not carry the name of the donor or any other sign. Father Remillieux always insisted that "this is a matter between your conscience and God" and that he did not wish to know who was contributing to the expenses of the church and how much or how little each was giving.

For a long time, priests from neighboring parishes were

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sceptical about Father Remillieux's method of handling money matters, and predicted it would fail. When Father Remillieux had proved through more than 25 years that it can be done, others began to follow his example.

Father Remillieux was also a pioneer in making the sacraments of baptism and matrimony a vital and important part of parish life. He did away with afternoon and evening baptisms, except in emergencies, and had children baptised on Sunday mornings, during Mass, among the prayers of the whole congregation. Similarly, solemn engagements and weddings ceased to be considered as merely private and family affairs and became important parish events. (PARIS, 10/3 CIP.)

Italian Film Congress

THE International Motion Picture Congress, held at Perugia under the sponsorship of the Mayor of the City, has been misused for Communist propaganda, said Father Felix A. Morlion, O.P., President of the International Pro Deo University, Rome. This was the reason, Father Morlion stated, why he did not participate in the discussion.

"I came to Perugia," he declared, "because I was told that this was a private meeting of film producers, actors, critics, and other people interested in motion picture problems, and that the subject would be 'how to make the problems of modern man live in today's motion pictures.' I came because I am interested in this topic, as a private person, not as a representative of any organization. If I had spoken at the Congress after its Communist undercurrents had become obvious, it might have been said that I represented the Catholic film movement and that the Catholics cooperated with the Congress. Therefore, I have refrained from making any statement at the Congress itself."

Father Morlion pointed out that a majority of the film experts whose participation had been announced before the Congress were not present at Perugia. He denounced many forms of Communist propaganda at the meeting. "The Italian Delegate, Umberto Barbaro," he stated, "made a speech on the philosophical theories of Marx as applied to the motion picture field. His statements had nothing to do with the topic which he was supposed to discuss. . . ."

Several speakers at the Perugia Congress presented the "neo-realistic" school in motion pictures as intrinsically linked to Communism. Father Morlion declared categorically that this is not true: "We tell the Communists: We agree with you on the statement that motion pictures must play a social role and express the reality of man, who is not an isolated being but a social being profoundly influenced by his surroundings. But we say that it is not enough to improve society to make man better. It is also necessary to make alive man's internal energies, to show man as he is, a being which tends incessantly towards God and cannot live his human life without God. This is true realism in motion picture art, a realism worthy of the height, width, and depth of man. This realism is not Communist."

(Rome, 10/3, CIP.)

The Devil and All That

LEO J. TRESE

IT IS no small part of modern man's tragedy that he has ceased to believe in devils. Not only today's pagans, but many even who profess Christianity, would classify Satan with Santa Claus as a symbolic myth.

The tragedy lies in the fact that dismissing Satan as a paleolithic fancy is playing right into that clever creature's hand. An enemy ignored is triply strong; lying in ambush, he can cut the opposition to pieces.

It may be assumed that Lucifer himself has had no small part in contributing to his supposed dissolution. He is the one person who gladly would be forgotten. And there is none better than he at the game of puffing up human pride to the point where it would rather be caught dead than be caught credulous. Even we who should know better are inclined to play to the gallery of intellectual conceit. I have heard many sermons on the world and the flesh, whose dangers everyone can see. I cannot recall when I have heard (or given, God spare me!) a sermon on the Devil, whose danger is the deadlier for being invisible.

Whether or not it sounds naïve, the truth is that there exists an innumerable host of spirits in whom hatred burns as fiercely as does love in their celestial counterparts. Their intelligence is just as keen, their power just as incalculable, as when they chose independence in darkness rather than servitude in light. The cleverness of their cunning would put the most devious Communist to shame. There is more destructive potency in their malice than in all the world's uranium. Except that their might is limited by a Man on a Cross, while the atom's only restraint is human fear.

They have an inerrancy in spotting the weak points in a man's armor. They have a genius for curdling the sweetest of human emotions and vitiating the noblest of human motives. The prospective monk at the monastery gates wonders whether he really is seeking God or trying to escape responsibility; the almsgiver wonders whether his happy glow is due to Christian charity or to self-righteous complacence; the parent punishing his child wonders whether it is love administering discipline or self-esteem seeking vindication; and an uneasy nation wonders, in its thoughtful citizens, whether it is for God or for Mammon that it is arming.

★

SUCH observations would sound as commonplaces to the ears of Father Donissan, the hero of Georges Bernanos' *Under the Sun of Satan* (*Pantheon*, $3.00). Modeled, by the author's own avowal, upon the Curé of Ars, Father Donissan is not a saint for stained-glass windows. In him is none of the sweetness of a Philip Neri, none of the glamor of an Ignatius Loyola. His

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was a very special vocation: to be a tool in the hand of God for the humbling of His ancient enemy. They were a seemingly ill-matched pair of opponents, this awkward unhappy priest, with time so short; and his wily, scornful antagonist, with all eternity to work in. From the moment that he first gazed upon Satan in the semblance of a friendly horse-trader, until the moment when the eyes of a dead child opened at his command only to close again while Satan laughed, there was no peace, no security, for Father Donissan, the saint of Lumbres. From his first overt victory, when he snatched poor Mouchette with her self-slit throat from the confident grasp of Lucifer, to his last and hidden victory, when his cold unwavering eyes punctured the inflated pride of the Academician Saint-Marin, there was for the tormented curé no joy of conquest, no confidence of ultimate triumph.

It is only by courtesy that *Under the Sun of Satan* is called a novel. There is a hero, admittedly, and a villain beyond all compare. But there is too much of truth to call it fiction; it is too real to call it imaginary. It is a realism far removed from the obscenities of the *Raintree County* type. It is a realism that makes night clubs and bawdy-houses seem but pale shadows of evil.

Indeed, "A Study In Evil" would seem the best description of this new translation of Bernanos' *Sous le soleil de Satan,* in which Harry Lorin Binsse has so well converted to English the nightmare foreboding of impending but unlocalized danger, the tense certainty of implacable forces behind the curtain of sense.

✦

GEORGES BERNANOS, like every true artist, has a style distinctly his own. It is a combination of ominousness and casualness, which leaves the i's undotted and the t's uncrossed. He disdains the cinematic detail of the popular best-seller. In reading his books (it is years ago that I was similarly impressed with his *Diary of a Country Priest*) I have the feeling of something seen and heard in a dream. There are half-understood conversations whose deeper meanings seem to escape one; there are scenes whose significance is accepted but not fully grasped. Even as I close the covers of *Under the Sun of Satan,* I have an annoying uncertainty as to whether or not Satan didn't outsmart Father Donissan after all; whether or not the pastor of Lumbres, for all that he was a saint, might not have missed the full stature of his greatness by very reason of his dogged preoccupation with his enemy. It is something like the problem of whether or not Hamlet was mad.

Well, the "intellectually enlightened" will classify *Under the Sun of Satan* as a grim phantasy, and proceed to forget it after an uneasy thrill or two. The more discerning will be uneasy, too. But their uneasiness will cause them to look beyond the facade of secularism and such other palpable evils as we face, and see the master strategist at work. Those with perception exceptionally refined, may even look inward, with some profit, for traces of Hell's changeling.

Vengeance or Goose Step?

WALDEMAR GURIAN

The High Cost of Vengeance. Freda Utley. Regnery. $3.50.

Again the Goose Step. Delbert Clark. Bobbs-Merrill. $3.00.

OVERSIMPLIFICATION and selective moral indignation are dangers to which the student of international relations and of conditions in foreign countries can easily succumb. It is unfortunate that the books of two foreign correspondents as able as Freda Utley and Delbert Clark have so many misjudgments produced by a highly emotional attitude. Both of these books on present-day Germany are very similar, despite their opposite points of view. Both writers emphasize the facts which happen to correspond to their basic sympathies. Freda Utley likes the German people and therefore all their errors must be attributed to external forces; Hitler, for example, was almost exclusively the product of the Allied policies after World War I. For Clark, however, Hitlerism can never disappear, it being the necessary expression of the German character. Both writers quote many proofs for their divergent views. These facts, taken in isolation, are not wrong, but they do not give the whole picture. Both writers contradict themselves without noticing it.

After emphasizing again and again—and correctly—the impossibility of putting the blame of collective guilt on a whole people, Miss Utley presents a picture of French policies of which this sentence is characteristics: "France is today like a dead weight hanging around the neck of the free world." (The title of the chapter is typical: The French Ride High. Miss Utley would surely protest vehemently—and rightly—against a headline: The Germans Ride High.). And Clark, after having told many stories illustrating the evil attitudes of almost all Germans — not only of those belonging to 'elites' but also of little men—complains that American policy did not give support to truly anti-Hitlerian, good Germans. It is, therefore, very fortunate that probably neither the attitude of Freda Utley nor that of Delbert Clark will have much influence on policies.

I first learned of Freda Utley's book this summer, during my stay in Germany, from the critical remarks of a German official who, having pointed out the inadequacies and blunders of the occupation authorities, remarked that it would be very bad if the Germans, impatient with these blunders, were to take Miss Utley's pro-German statements as picturing the whole truth. And Mr. Clark is somewhat bitter about the lack of distrust for Germans in leading American circles.

The fundamental trouble with both books is the absence of a correct historical perspective and a lack of common sense in the interpretation of events. For Freda Utley, the Morgenthau Plan, with its foolish, in-

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competent, and purely destructive proposals, has dominated, until the present time, American policies toward Germany. She has apparently not read the careful history of the Morgenthau Plan which M. Lasky has published in *Monat* and in *The Nineteenth Century*. Lasky reveals that the Morgenthau Plan from the beginning was opposed by most influential men and he shows how it began—fortunately—to vanish a few weeks after Roosevelt and Churchill had endorsed it.

Barbara Ward is surely right when she states in the New York *Times* of October 2, that the present western attitude toward Germany is opposite to the attitude which prevailed just after the war, when the immediate possibilities of German revenge were overrated. Freda Utley herself admits that from the beginning of the occupation a negative policy was not carried out. But, despite occasional praise of occupation officials, she gives the impression that a policy of hate and destruction prevails even today. She is often carried away by her own emotionalism. The charge that American crimes are as bad as those committed by the Nazis is manifest nonsense, as many Germans will agree, even when they complain about the mistakes, errors and imperfections of American policies during and after the war. She does not realize that many Germans—who, of course, reject oversimplifying accusations against the German people and the unjust thesis of a collective guilt which makes all Germans participate equally in an unchangeably evil racial character—devote much thought to the question: How was the Nazi régime possible? She apparently regards the Third Reich as a minor and excusable accident; and she has completely overlooked the debates about basic trends in German history which can be observed in Germany—even now, despite all disappointments about the policies of the occupation.

Even with her great journalistic abilities, she has produced only a somewhat boring book. The occupation forces are, despite the existence of some decent members, always wrong; the Germans are always innocent victims (only some Germans are criticized for not resisting sharply enough occupation policies). On the one hand everything is done, as she says, to prevent Germany from rising again, and on the other hand, Germany will be driven into the arms of the Communist East, and will occupation policies sharply enough). On the one hand in spite of its one-sided character, a mission to fulfill, if today a universal hatred of Germany prevailed, but fortunately the voices of hate and revenge against the defeated of World War II are not determining present trends of public opinion in the West and in the United States particularly.

*

THEREFORE a book like that of Delbert Clark's cannot be regarded as typical of the prevailing mood in this country. Clark has used his pages—as has, by the way, Freda Utley also—to make public his dislike of some occupation officials. For Clark, they are too pro-German, particularly too trusting toward capitalist and reactionary Germans, whereas to Freda Utley they are

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SHEED & WARD'S USUAL

delight in their Fall list seems this year to be Very Widely Shared. Every book so far published is going ahead making friends and influencing people: in other words, selling like mad. Everything, that is, except **THE LAWS OF HOLY MASS** ($2)—and we never expected a straight translation of the rubrics of the Roman Missal to set the Hudson on fire. We have already prevented two very-liturgically-minded lay people from sending the book to their pastors with certain passages marked, and hope to heaven no one else will be so tactless.

BEST AND GAYEST OF ALL

is the reception the **Knox LATIN-ENGLISH MISSAL** is getting: it is loved on sight, just as we hoped, and it's no joke to say that if you want to give one for Christmas, you'd better order it right away. Your bookstore can show you all four bindings, we hope—if he can't, let Lucy MacGill know and she will take care of the matter.

Two new books appear this week: Mr. Sheed ought to be getting awfully holy, keeping such company:

COLLECTED LETTERS OF ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX, translated by **F. J. Sheed** ($3.75), would be important on any list. These 247 letters, released by the Lisieux Carmel on the 50th anniversary of St. Thérèse's death, include everything they have in her handwriting. Abbé Combes has added enough biographical background to make clear in what circumstances each letter was written—that a particularly gay letter, for instance, was written when the Saint was in agony from the disease that killed her. The thing about saints is that the tougher things are, the more they cheer up—as St. Francis de Sales well remarked, "A sad saint would be a sorry saint." Hence the title **SAINTS ARE NOT SAD** for the new anthology of saints assembled by **F. J. Sheed** ($3.75). There are forty saints in the book, and no gloom. The authors include Father Vincent McNabb, O.P., Alice Curtayne, Archbishop Goodier and C. C. Martindale, S.J.

MELVILLE by **Geoffrey Stone** ($4.50), fourth in the series **Great Writers of the World,** will come at the end of this month. We'll tell you more about it later, in the meantime just noting that Mr. Stone takes Melville's mind seriously, and is more concerned with his philosophy than his whales. **Christopher Dawson's** second series of Gifford Lectures, which we have been calling *Christianity and Western Culture,* turns out to be called **RELIGION AND THE RISE OF WESTERN CULTURE** ($3.50). It will be published next month.

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SHEED & WARD

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too anti-German and too permeated with the Morganthau spirit. Mr. Clark tries to show how the Germans are unrepentant, interested only in themselves, unable to understand the sufferings of other people. He is able to discover this German bad behavior because he speaks German fluently. True, there are some good Germans, but they are isolated and in despair. They are not supported by the American authorities. Because Clark mixes up this last statement with generalizations about the average bad German, his observation will not make too much impression, though, by the way and unfortunately, it is correct. Clark's lack of perspective, his incapacity to understand the difficulties with which Germans were faced —for instance, the complications of life under a totalitarian régime and its aftermath—make his book appear as the product of a disappointed perfectionist who expected too much, and therefore became a bitter critic of everything. It must be regretted that even Clark's correct observations, for example, his statement that not all anti-Communists in Germany must necessarily be friends of the United States and adherents of a just and lasting peace, appear in the context of his book as an expression of his dislike, which is as emotional as Freda Utley's uncritical love and admiration.

What we need are not books full of emotional, special pleading, pro and con, but works of keen observers who are able to understand the picture of our time. Nowhere is this picture as chaotic as in Germany. Thus, to discover trends shaping the future requires the coolest judgment. The basic tendencies of Freda Utley's and Delbert Clark's books seem to be worlds apart, but if we look closer we discover that both belong to the same type of descriptions of foreign countries. Miss Utley and Mr. Clark are not able to give objective analysis; they are presenting their prejudices and preconceived opinions, using material won by sojourns in Germany to "prove" their point of view. But we are interested in Germany, not in Freda Utley's or Delbert Clark's subjective picture of it.

Books

The Last Enchantments. Robert Liddell. Appleton. $2.75.

THE general scheme of this book is not an ordinary one. The writer proposed to recreate the loneliness and misery which accompany a solitary old age, and to tell of it with a background of satire prompted by the activities of a group of people in and around an English university town.

To obtain a kind of idyllic tone one of the characters speaks in the first person, and describes certain ordinary events which occur in Christminster, a town that resembles Oxford, during several years prior to the last war. He tells of the various people with whom he and his brother become acquainted while they live together in Christminster, and he tells, especially, of Mrs. Foyle, a finger-less, toe-less, hair-less, old woman whose greatest satisfaction and main mental support is the successful career of her only daughter. Miranda, the girl, is a

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selfish, untalented actress who is married to the famous actor Sir Peter Elliot.

Mrs. Foyle persists in the pretense of an intimate and loving relationship with her child until her dying days in the public work house infirmary where she finally realizes that she has been abandoned. This, simply, is the major development of the book.

Along the way in the story there are sardonic examinations of certain types. The examinations and the types are not particularly interesting or subtle or important. Moreover, the author's method puts him at a disadvantage. The characters who are meant to personify probity become increasingly attractive as targets for satire themselves. Andrew and Stephen, the brothers, show forth as an effete and precious pair who listen to Beethoven and Haydn quartets, read Jane Austen, and walk along the river more self-consciously than the usual run of self-conscious fictional intellectuals. When neighbors ring their bell one brother says, "Let's be kind to ourselves." They ignore the call.

Most of the time Mr. Liddell fails to exhibit the necessary equipment for achieving destruction by dialogue. Here is a representative bit between Cyprian, an actor whose name and whose simperings leave no doubt about the author's estimate of him, and the speaker of the story, Andrew. " 'Still buried here, my dear?', he asked me, with a scornful smile. 'Any objections?', I said. 'Oh, no, ducky,' said Cyprian. 'It's no one's business but your own. If you don't mind being out of the swim, one ought to leave you to be happy in your own funny little way, I suppose. But you know, coming down here, I do find this place so provincial. I can't think how I stood it so long as an undergraduate—but . . .' " but that is enough.

Despite the quotations on the dust jacket this book shows little evidence of any unusual talent. There are not many signs of an ability to use words effectively. The conception, which was not common, has suffered here a common treatment.

GEORGE MILES.

On Writing. Willa Cather. Knopf. $2.25.

ANYONE who has taught "creative writing" is familiar with what I may call the Detail Dilemma. One has to stress from the start the immense importance of concrete detail—and what happens? The earnest student immediately begins to turn in papers that are flooded with details—note the plural. Anything he has to say becomes submerged in irrelevancies. The instructor points this out, to be answered by a wail of pain, "But sir, you told us—" His inevitable reply is that one detail is enough if it is the right one. "But how do I know which is the right one?" "That, Mr. Jones, is what we're all here to find out, myself included."

No wonder so many people say that creative writing can't be taught. They're right—it can't. It can, however, be learned. The "teacher" learns along with those of his students who are capable of learning, no matter how often he has taught the course before, because every

REALLY BAD REVIEWS

can help to sell a book amazingly, as we found out when two or three people got really cross about **Msgr. Knox's THE MASS IN SLOW MOTION** ($2.50) last year—we suppose it's the contrast between the delight of one reviewer and the horror of another that makes people feel they must see what brought this on. So far, **THE CREED IN SLOW MOTION** ($2.50, too) has had only praise, but there's time yet. It's selling divinely, anyhow.

Father **John Carmel Heenan's THEY MADE ME SIGN** ($2) sold out its first binding—we hope the copies all went to non-Catholics who were thinking of marrying Catholics. It's being well reviewed in non-Catholic papers: Dr. Ficke, a Presbyterian minister, says: "This book should be in the hands of every Protestant minister so that he may have a perfect understanding of a subject on which he is sure to be consulted." If you know of a non-Catholic, Protestant or Pagan, who is engaged to a Catholic, do give it to him: it may well make All the Difference.

We knew more than mothers would enjoy **Mary Perkins' MIND THE BABY** ($2), because all Sheed & Ward did, and we have very few mothers on the staff, but we were hardly prepared for the width of Father John S. Kennedy's recommendation: If you have a baby, if you have ever had a baby, if you might some day have a baby, if you know a baby, if you have ever been a baby, I strongly recommend to you Mary Perkins' new book . . . Unless you absolutely hate babies, you will revel in it."

Lucile Hasley's REPROACHFULLY YOURS ($2.25) is just out. Don't let her apparent light-heartedness fool you into supposing you can read her book without being made to think: you are apt to find the person you are laughing so heartily at is yourself rather than the people you normally find so much more amusing—always a startling and salutary situation, here made as nearly painless as possible.

Etienne Gilson's DANTE THE PHILOSOPHER ($4) has so far had no long reviews, perhaps because it takes a learned reviewer to tackle it, and learned reviewers are not the sort that can be hustled . . . **THREE MYSTICS:** St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa and El Greco ($7.50) with its 100 illustrations and general richness, has been out of stock, but it will (please heaven) be available again by the time you see this. What a Christmas present for the mystically and artistically minded!

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student has his own way of learning. So has every great writer. The value of Willa Cather's *On Writing* is that she allows us at times to learn along with her. In one form or another most of the thirteen short pieces before us are mainly concerned with the dilemma of detail. The best of them, "The Novel Démeublé," is concerned with it alone.

Let me, however, quote from another piece, not previously reprinted, "On the Art of Fiction":

> Art, it seems to me, should simplify. That, indeed, is very nearly the whole of the higher artistic process; finding what conventions of form and what detail one can do without and yet preserve the spirit of the whole—so that all that one has suppressed and cut away is there to the reader's consciousness as much as if it were in type on the page. Millet had done hundreds of sketches of peasants sowing grain, some of them very complicated and interesting, but when he came to paint the spirit of them all into one picture, "The Sower," the composition is so simple that it seems inevitable. All the discarded sketches that went before made the picture what it finally became, and the process was all the time one of simplifying, of sacrificing many conceptions good in themselves for one that was better and more universal.

Any questions, Mr. Jones?

Everything in this book is valuable, with the possible exception of Mr. Stephen Tennant's foreword, which reads rather turgidly beside Miss Cather's pared-down clarity. Note especially her creative criticism of Sarah Orne Jewett, Stephen Crane and Katherine Mansfield, and her dissection of Defoe. Four letters, two of them addressed to THE COMMONWEAL, will delight those of Willa Cather's readers who have "always wanted to know" how her most famous novels came to be written.

VIVIAN MERCIER.

The History of Nature. Carl Friedrich von Weizsacker. Translated by Fred D. Wieck. University of Chicago Press. $3.00.

THIS packed little book, by the scientist who is perhaps best known for his establishment of the Kant-LaPlace nebular theory of the evolution of our planetary system, is not for the lazy-minded. Dr. von Weizsacker makes a strenuous and successful effort to write with all possible simplicity; but what he has to say must remain, in the nature of things, hard going. For what he has undertaken is to write nothing less than exactly what his tremendous title indicates: a history of nature, its origins, development and direction, with a consideration of man both as a part of nature and as the subject to whom nature is object.

Dr. von Weizsacker discusses such formidable problems as the structure of time, the meaning of infinity, the nature of space, and the quality we call "life." Partly because these staggering themes—never under any circumstances simplifiable—are presented with such compactness and brevity (the time structure, for example, is

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handled in 17 pages), the prose is necessarily particularly thick with meaning. The reader must not skip a sentence, not a word; and his mind must be undistractedly attentive. If he is willing to follow this discipline, he will find here a book of extraordinary suggestiveness and illumination. It will stand re-readings, and many of them. Here are marshaled the compelling reasons for modern scientific belief that nature "began," instead of being a continuum outside historic time, as an easy rationalist supposition would have it; that its history is proceeding irreversibly; and that it will "end." Here is an exceptionally deft demolition of naïve materialism. Here is brilliant exposition of the difficult concept of "chance," and a theory of subject-object relationships that sounds the deepest deeps indeed. And here by the score are flashing insights, expressed in memorable turns of phrase. (As for instance: "An instinctive action may be defined as being analogous, in point of time, to what the organ is in point of space and matter." This is very nearly a volume of philosophy condensed into twenty-four words).

The concluding portion of Dr. von Weizsacker's study deals with "Man: Inner History." Having traced in his preceding chapter ("Man: Outer History") the probable physical evolution of our kind, Dr. von Weizsacker here explores our internality. With no reluctance, he speaks of "soul;" and he makes it clear why inescapably he must. He finds a war occurring between man-of-instinct and man-of-insight; and he finds (and makes) it very plain that the latter must lose to the former unless insight be lit by love. "The scientific and technical world of modern man is the result of his daring enterprise, knowledge without love." This whole section is particularly rich in arresting and provocative phrasings. "Objectively, all nature is in the state which, in man, turns to guilt, but subjectively, nature is not guilty." "Man is the being who shudders at his own naturalness."

A short review must fail to do more than hint at the depth and richness of this remarkable work. After all, it ranges over geological aeons, and spaces unimaginable. (A light-year is a little less than six million million miles. Dr. von Weizsacker compels the reader to accompany him, in the search for understanding, to the farthest visible nebulae, which are five hundred million light-years away). The scope is nothing less than Nature, past, present and to come. But any reader willing to follow Dr. von Weizsacker on his enormous journey, and through the subtle intricacies of his thought about it, may be rewarded by coming to understand what has led this towering scientist to write at the last:

> Will, of its own power, can perform single good deeds, but it cannot endow itself with love. But once we have experienced the possibility of love, something remains behind in us called conscience. We know then that without love we are missing the essential. Love itself comes from the objective potentiality, from God, and if it comes to us we experience it as an act of grace. Love can be given to us—that is the whole substance of the Christian doctrine of salvation. It is rarely given to us before, in despair of ourselves, we have asked for it.

ALAN DEVOE.

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The Fundamentals of the Christian Religion. Rev. Joseph Jacobs. Meador. $2.50.

THIS is indeed a very good, didactic and impressive exposition of the most important truths of the Christian revelation—from the Trinity to man's Redemption. Old truths all, but not musty or stale, for the author has succeeded in imparting a certain freshness even to questions as dry as original sin. Through adhering strictly to dogma, and to the letter of Scripture, Rev. J. Jacobs's vivid imagination uncovers a lot of psychological implications unexpected by the reader.

The title *Fundamentals* seemed to imply something reduced and more precise than what the index and the whole book come to display. Not all Catholic truths are admitted as fundamental by Christian fundamentalists. We do not doubt that the doctrine of Purgatory is an important one; we would hesitate, however, to have it classified among fundamental Christian truths. The same for the Immaculate Conception, the beautiful dogma proclaimed in 1854; besides, for a fundamental truth, it seems to me it is proved here rather poorly. The author would certainly be more convincing in his quotations from the Apostolic Fathers if, as in other quotations spread through his book, he had not omitted reference to the place he quotes from; besides, his own explanations and arguments about the chosen texts are sometimes as weak as his proofs by reason: "Had she [Mary, from whom Christ had taken his human nature] at any time been stained with original sin, then the Redeemer would have had flesh that would have been unworthy of the Son of God." (What about the whole flood of genes and chromosomes accumulated in Christ's generation, from Juda and David to Joseph and Mary?)

As many other religious writers have done before him, the author seems not to have done enough considering and weighing the materials of his fundamentals.

J. A. CORREIA.

Parson Austen's Daughter. Helen Ashton. Dodd Mead. $3.00.

Pemberley Shades. D. A. Bonavia-Hunt. Dutton. $3.00.

More About Jane Austen. Sheila Kaye-Smith and G. B. Stern. Harper. $3.50.

THERE'S a red brick cottage by the horse pond of a small village in Hampshire where the roads to Winchester and Gosport divide, and there this summer Chawton Cottage was formally opened to the public. It was in Chawton that Jane Austen spent the last eight years of her life, and where all her novels, except *Northanger Abbey,* were written or revised. Close to the town of Alton—the model for Highbury in *Emma*—Chawton Cottage was part of the estate inherited by Jane's brother Edward from some childless cousins. Not since Parson Austen had retired and his eldest son, James, had moved into the Parsonage at Steventon, twelve miles away from Chawton, had Mrs. Austen and two daughters had a settled home. And when the Rev. George Austen died in lodgings at Bath, they were all three delighted to have

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a garden again of their own and a house where the grandchildren could come for visits.

Jane was a treasured Aunt. She told long fairy stories; helped them dress up; sang songs and played square dances and could beat even the boys at Spillikins. For the older children there was the excitement of hearing her read aloud her latest novel to the family. When she gave her nephews and nieces advice about the stories they were writing, she always said: "You must employ the material that is nearest at hand. You must contrive your story out of the simplest everyday matters."

That is what she did herself, writing of the neighbors in Hampshire or Kent or the vistors in Bath and London. Her two most famous novels had been scribbled on odd scraps of paper when she was a girl in Steventon. Her sister Cassandra and she had laughed at them together. It was to cheer themselves as spinsters that she rewrote *Sense and Sensibility* at Chawton and, at Cassie's suggestion, dug up a sixteen-year-old story called *First Impressions* and sent it up to London as *Pride and Prejudice*. It was the great John Murray, publisher for Lord Byron, who asked for the privilege of printing *Emma*. *Northanger Abbey* had been sold anonymously by Jane in Bath in 1798. Eighteen years later Henry, her favorite brother, paid £10 to buy it back for her. Henry published both that and *Persuasion* after Jane's death. She died in 1817, at forty-two, in Winchester Close where she had gone with Cassandra to consult another doctor.

From the lively girl with flashing eyes who so loved to dance at the monthly Assembles in the Angel Inn at Basingstoke, she had become a reserved women at her best with her nieces and nephews. She refused to meet Madame de Stael in London and found no pleasure in being hailed at parties as the popular authoress.

Her wit, however, never staled nor turned acidulous; her good people can be kindly without being bores. Perhaps nothing could better sharpen an appreciation of her sense of balance and perspective as the unfortunate attempt by Miss Bonavia-Hunt to write a continuation of *Pride and Prejudice* in a novel called *Pemberley Shades*. Miss Hunt has handled the lesser characters like Lady Catherine de Bourgh with better fortune, but Darcey and even Elizabeth are tiresome; the plot lacks credibility and the happiest occurrence is the elopement of Anne de Bourgh with a scapegrace.

★

G. B. STERN does better in emulating the inimitable Austen in the Seven-Year-After chapters she has essayed for *Mansfield Park, Emma* and *Northanger Abbey* in *More About Jane Austen,* but on the whole it seems imprudent for her and Sheila Kaye-Smith to have tried to supplement their wholly delightful *Speaking of Jane*. In that it was remarked that no household domestic is ever given a personality by Miss Austen; in this book the same point is proved by enumerating all the footmen, maids, etc., mentioned.

Evening parties, Miss Kaye-Smith points out, were fashionable in Bath. In the country the dinner parties meant that guests might arrive shortly after four to stay

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at least five hours. The time consumed driving over bad roads also lengthened the period of a visit so much that a fortnight was probably the equivalent of the modern weekend. Weddings were usually restricted to the family and for Christmas neither trees, presents or cards had come in vogue.

Of these three books on Jane, we would give first rank to *Parson Austen's Daughter.* Listed as a novel it is actually a full biography with a comment on current history, but lacks any references. Miss Ashton draws an unusually cheerful picture of life in the Steventon parsonage where the Reverend George Austen as rector—not vicar—was entitled to the tithes and to farming his own glebe. Mrs. Austen's good housekeeping saw to it that the larder was full of cream and butter, poultry, mutton, fruits and berries; home brewed beer and home-made wine. And very different from the home of the Brontes, the Parsonage echoed with the games and theatricals of the eight young Austens and their friends.

Miss Ashton ascribes two unhappy romances to Jane; one at Steventon where a dashing Irishman jilted her for an heiress, and one in 1801 at Sidmouth on the coast of Devon where she met a young man who died shortly after. Miss Ashton believes Jane buried her heart with him. Cassandra's heart had never mended since her love died of fever in the West Indies. The tender devotion of the two sisters is the center of the story, a very agreeable one, in which all the Austens come to life in the quiet charm of the English countryside.

E. V. R. WYATT.

W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet. A. Norman Jeffares. Yale. $5.00.

THIS being Goethe's centenary year, one wonders if a valid comparison could be made between Yeats and Goethe. I'm not going to attempt it here, for I do not know enough about the great German. Still, some obvious similarities do catch the eye. Both poets grew steadily with the years, widening and deepening their control over the multitudinous aspects of their complex personalities. Yeats, of course, was always in violent reaction against the eighteenth-century enlightenment that provided Goethe with at least half his inspiration, and could never have paralleled the latter's scientific achievements. Nor was he capable of the sustained effort and large-scale design that produced "Faust." But his lyric poetry is surely not inferior to Goethe's and shows a similar development from Romantic tentativeness to Classical certainty. Furthermore, both men were at all times seekers after wisdom, and believed themselves, in later years, to have attained it. Their more idolatrous readers have always regarded them as sages. Both learned much of their wisdom from association with a series of diversely gifted women. Both grew up in societies that were technologically backward and both in their different degrees revealed administrative ability and enjoyed their experiences in public life.

Mr. Jeffares, though he can chuckle at his hero's inconsistencies, at heart believes that Yeats was a sage as

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well as a poet. And why not? There have been too many patronizing studies of Yeats by men without a quarter of his wisdom or talent. Keeping well "this side idolatry," Mr. Jeffares exemplifies an attitude to the poet widespread among young Irishmen of his generation. His book is a young man's book, and a good one. When he has lived as long as Yeats he may write a better one, but no Irishman of an earlier generation could have done justice to such a controversial figure as Yeats was in Ireland during his lifetime. I question too whether any non-Irish critic can ever fully appreciate Yeats.

The sub-title "Man and Poet" is a precise one. Mr. Jeffares has made no attempt to rival the copious detail of Hone, the official biographer, but does endeavor to understand and explain every twist and turn of his subject's devious personality. Being young, he does not always succeed. He is sometimes naïve, sometimes obscure, never bored or patronizing, as Hone often seems to be. And he never forgets that most of his readers will come to him seeking an elucidation of the poetry. Nobody, however well versed in Yeats, can read this book without having a number of hitherto obscure passages made clear as day for him.

The most important new material used by Mr. Jeffares, in my opinion, consists of an unpublished draft of a further autobiographical work by the poet and many of his self-revelatory letters to Mrs. Olivia Shakespeare, who played an extremely important and previously unsuspected part in his emotional life. It was in one of these I found the hint for my meditation on Yeats and Goethe. Referring to D. H. Lawrence, the poet writes:

> Of course happiness is not where he seems to place it. We are happy when for everything inside us there is an equivalent something outside. I think it was Goethe said this—one should add the converse. It is terrible to desire and not possess, and terrible to possess and not desire. Because of these we long for an age which has that unity which Plato defined somewhere as sorrowing and rejoicing over the same things.

Surely the man who could write that had attained wisdom, albeit a pagan wisdom?

VIVIAN MERCIER.

A Writer's Notebook. W. Somerset Maugham. Doubleday. $4.00.

THE contents of this book, culled from Mr. Maugham's private notebook, are primarily addressed to writers, but there is no real reason why the general public should not find it of interest. It shows how a writer's mind works behind the facade of his finished product; it shows in many instances the scaffolding of his plots; above all, it reveals the man himself in a way that his completed novels rarely do. To be sure, it is desultory and fragmentary, with all the gaps to be expected of a book on which one has not worked regularly. But being chronological, it has the definite value of show-

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ing the progression of Mr. Maugham as both artist and man. The cynic revealed in the notes written down in 1892, and in the years immediately following, is gradually moderated, until finally, in the last summing-up made in 1944 and in the Postscript five years later, we meet a man mellowed by time, experience and observation, saddened a little, too, by the fact that the meaning of life, a phrase he harps upon throughout, has somehow escaped him.

He has, by his own admission, taken his stand in life as in art, on realism and common sense, excluding anything beyond his perceptions. He is singularly frank about this; and confesses his own limitations. In 1917 he makes this entry: "Most people cannot see anything, but I can see what is in front of my nose with extreme clearness; the greatest writers can see through a brick wall. My vision is not so penetrating. For many years I have been described as a cynic: I told the truth." He reiterates this twenty-seven years later, if in a somewhat more mellow fashion. Referring to what he set down ten years before in the way of meditations on God, immortality and the meaning and worth of life, he does not see any cause to change his mind, though, he adds, "if I had to write it over again I should try to deal a little less superficially with the pressing subject of values and perhaps find something less haphazard to say about intuition." Looking backward, he wonders sadly if he has "done everything too often, known too many people, read too many books, seen too many pictures, statues, churches, and fine houses, and listened to too much music." He does not know whether God exists or not, and adds: "But if God exists and he concerns himself with the affairs of humanity, then surely he must have sufficient common-sense to take a lenient view, as lenient a view as a reasonable man takes, of the weakness of human beings."

On the whole, though his life has been "a pretty good life, perhaps better than most people's" he would not live it over again, on the ground that "it would be as idle as to read again a detective story that you have read before." On the other hand, though he modestly repeats his limitations, he realizes, as it were with a fresh comprehension, that art in itself is not enough, that "the philosophers were right who claimed that the value of art lies not in beauty, but in right action." If art is no more than a pleasure, he pursues the thought further, "it is of no great consequence. Art, unless it leads to right action, is no more than the opium of an intelligentsia." Now this is, perhaps, something new to Mr. Maugham, who not so long ago made the statement that art's first ostensible function was entertainment, at least fictional art's.

These are eleventh-hour thoughts. We can afford to regard with charity many of the early entries, when the author, like any other ambitious young man, tried to follow the spirit of his time, now making an effort, unsuccessfully, to coin epigrams in the manner of Oscar Wilde, now making equally unsuccessful ventures into exuberant descriptions of nature "fashionable in the nineties," a fault he freely confesses in italics. Mr.

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Maugham had his period of sowing his literary wild oats, and is honest enough to confess it forthrightly.

Mr. Maugham, in these pages, is not only quite modest about his own position in literature—never once does he claim to be a major writer—but he is honest enough to retract any unfair criticism he has made in the past about other writers. But above all, his book is absorbing for what he reveals about himself.

JOHN COURNOS.

The Edge of Doom. Leo Brady. Dutton. $3.00.

LEO BRADY has written an extraordinary first novel. On the surface *The Edge of Doom* is a thriller about a young man who, grief-stricken over his mother's death, kills a priest in resentment against the Church that had refused to bury his suicidal father. Then follows the pursuit, a chase so exciting, so full of narrow escapes that you read faster and faster until you come, as tense and breathless as the boy, to the inevitable conclusion.

But this novel is interiorly the story of Martin Lynn's flight from his own conscience and from the Hound of Heaven. The blow that killed the old priest "had been a savage answer to so many refusals," the don'ts of the Commandments, of his religious mother, of the Confessional. Martin was confused by externals, by the contrasts between the Church's rich, glittering symbols and the poor box which represented his own poverty and insecurity. On the day after the murder he felt free of tyranny. He knew he had obliterated the clues in the rectory where he had committed the crime, but he didn't realize that the trail was also scattered beforehand. He becomes the instrument of his own torture.

Counterpoint to this theme of Martin's flight from the law (represented by the detective assigned to the case) and from his conscience (represented by the Confessional which becomes an obsession as relentless in its pursuit as the police) is another story of rebellion. On the night of her uncle's death, the niece of the dead priest was saved from a civil marriage to the man who guided her away from the old beliefs "into which she had been trapped." She too now thinks she is free—since her uncle's voice of authority is stilled. Curiously enough Mr. Brady does not develop his second theme sufficiently, but, concentrating on Martin, slights all the other characters in his book.

As a novel *The Edge of Doom* is also not entirely satisfactory in plot structure; it is more like a long short story or a thoughtfully written case history. Although extremely well written the book is at times over-written, at other times incomplete, and it lacks the balance which touches of humor would have supplied. I wish Mr. Brady, in tracing the neurotic aspects of Martin's character, had dealt more fully with the important influence of the army psychiatrist who had classified the boy as 4-F. We know the boy considered himself abnormal for having to answer the questions regarding sexual experiences in the negative. "And the draft card had burned in his pocket thereafter, a symbol of his shame, of his slavery to outmoded moral codes."

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But in the scenes of violence, of mounting terror and in the gripping finale, Mr. Brady displays his sense of theater and writes with a vividness that throws the reader into a cold sweat. One is not surprised that Samuel Goldwyn's studio bought this book so quickly for the films. It should make a first-rate thriller; and it is to be hoped that Mr. Goldwyn will retain the intensely Catholic themes that run through the story, themes for which the thrills are merely decoration. This is not the soft, sweet Catholicism of "Going My Way" and "Come to the Stable."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Unions and Capitalism. Charles E. Lindbloom. Yale. $3.75.

THE author of this book, an associate professor of economics at Yale, has written a gloomy but thought-provoking book. He knows and has studied the union movement in the United States. It is his gloomy conclusion that the unions are too powerful and will remain so. They have a monopoly not by their power over supply or over the consumer, but the buyer (i.e., the employer).

Lindbloom believes that union power if unbroken will lead to unemployment or inflation or both. He believes that although our large unions are conservative the end result of their policies will be revolutionary and will give the blow to the competitive system.

The signs may be perceived now but the results will not appear until much later.

Such a line of argument is not new. That unions are incompatible with prosperity and capitalism was contended by conservatives long before the union movement attained its present strength.

The classical economist has always contended that the union is a pressure group, which, of its very nature, interferes with the "natural laws" of the economy, and will destroy competition, etc. Lindbloom brings to the ancient lament facts and interpretations taken from current unions' practice and achievement.

The author speaks with sympathy of the aims of trade unions and deplores the excesses of the old way. But to him labor is always a commodity, the competitive way though a hard way is the right way, wages are the price of a resource and should be regulated only by the process of competition, etc.

Lindbloom does not believe that free competition, which we never had, will be restored. He is gloomy on the prospects of government action to break the unions and restore the balance. He ends the book on a slight note of optimism, the hope that a union leadership will develop capable of using power responsibility.

Attempts to bring democracy into industry are to him syndicalism and always harmful. The way of the papal encyclicals is hardly discussed.

The reader of this book should bear in mind that the capitalist system in the United States fell on evil days when the unions had no power; and also that it is an assumption and not a fact that prosperity and a high level of wages and employment cannot be maintained or attained in a capitalism modified by a strong union movement.

CHARLES OWEN RICE.

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The Seeker and the Sought. Marie Baumer. Scribner. $2.75.

THIS is a curiously contrived novelette which the publishers call a tale of suspense and which I found to be an unusually twisted Moral Tale. None of the predicaments results inevitably from the preceding one; no situation is a trap of circumstance, and none really arouses anxiety and fear in either the characters or the reader. There is little indication that the Sought is aware of the Seeker. Sequences occur from the same sort of artificial motives as in a Treasure Hunt and many of the ideas and incidents are hack.

Yet, strangely, without the enticements of tension and fantasy, the reader reads on. The author's intellectual plotting partly takes care of this; the rest is undertaken by her theme. The first impression is of an act of atonement, the expiation of a sin of omission, but when the victim is sacrficed without charity, and with complacency; when the ordeal is suffered with no grace transforming the Seeker, the last impression is of as diabolically an unregenerate, petty assassin as has appeared in a thriller for many a day.

FLORENCE CODMAN.

Vanishing Wilderness. F. R. LaMonte and M. H. Welch. Illustrated by Vladimir Perfilieff. Liveright Black & Gold Library. $2.49.

THE house of Liveright has performed a useful service in adding this book, first published 15 years ago, to its handsome series called the Black and Gold library.

Vanishing Wilderness tells the habits, haunts and histories of more than a score of the "queerer" kinds of wild animals that are likely to dwindle to extinction. Giraffes, for instance; and porcupines, ant-eaters, elephants, and such. The authors, members of the staff of the American Museum of Natural History, have wanted to preserve these creatures in print (as they are preserved in habitat groups at the Museum) against the day when they may have become non-existent in the living flesh. To this task they have brought a great deal of fascinating historical knowledge and expert natural history lore, and they have blended them into a most readable book. They write breezily, in a style particularly likely to appeal to young people.

There is one demurrer to be filed. The authors have a way of so stressing the ugliness, ferocity, or nastiness of their animals that some readers may be moved to say, "Well, what if they are vanishing? Good riddance!" (For instance: "The coyote is a small, slinking animal . . . its disposition just plain mean." Or, "the rhinoceros is without a single saving grace." Or, "the porcupine's virtues are nil." Why bother to save creatures like these, even in print?).

Except for this curious self-defeating tendency, *Vanishing Wilderness* is a good book to arouse interest in animals and their conservation.

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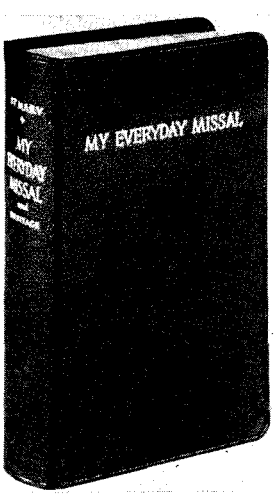

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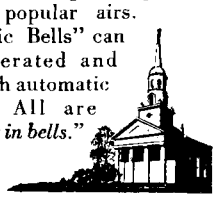

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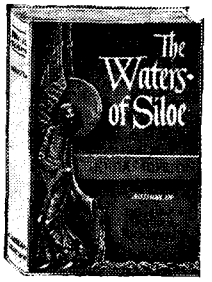

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